

# HEARST RANCH

*A Historic Conservation Opportunity for the Central Coast*



# An Unparalleled Opportunity

## *A Summary of the Ranch's Vast Natural Resources*

The Hearst Ranch encompasses approximately 82,000 acres and 18 miles of California's most scenic and precious coastline. The Ranch is a significant ecological connection and wildlife corridor between Big Sur and the San Luis Obispo County coastline connecting to Cambria. One of the largest remaining privately held coastal properties, the Ranch offers a vast and abundant amount of pristine natural resources, and is an extraordinary ecological resource for nearly every type of California coastal habitat. This document and the attached appendices (entitled "Conservation Easement Area Summary of Resources" and "Fee Acquisition Area Summary of Resources") provide a summary of the vast natural resources on the Hearst Ranch.





A working cattle ranch since the mid-1800's, the property also surrounds Hearst Castle, one of America's most widely known and visited cultural resources, and a donation from Hearst to the State in 1957. As discussed in the transaction summary, the proposed conservation transaction would enable the state of California to own most of the coastal areas of the Hearst Ranch in fee, and to acquire a conservation easement for the eastern expanses of the Ranch to be held by California Rangeland Trust (CRT), a land trust focused on preserving and protecting working landscapes.

As part of a lengthy planning and due diligence process associated with the possible conservation purchase of fee and easement protections over the Ranch, a team of pre-eminent scholars and scientists has surveyed the Ranch, from canyon bottoms to ridge tops, from the coast to the inland areas to identify and evaluate the range of resources found on the Ranch. Botanists, biologists, cultural historians and rangeland management professionals assessed the physical features, species present, and general conditions of the Ranch. The entire Ranch was surveyed aerially, and the vast majority of the 128-square mile property was inspected visually, as a part of this thorough assessment process.



*The Hearst Castle-Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument welcomes up to one million visitors annually. It was donated by the Hearst Corporation to the People of California in 1957.*



*Aerial view of a portion of the 82,000 acre Hearst Ranch.*



# A Vital Ecological Link

The Hearst Ranch is home to unique and high-quality natural resources unparalleled elsewhere. The sheer size of the Ranch provides conservation benefits that cannot be matched through parcel-by-parcel conservation efforts. In fact, the Ranch provides a vital ecological link along the coast range of central California. The Ranch connects migratory pathways and habitats of the Los Padres National Forest, Fort Hunter Liggett, and the Nacimiento and San Antonio watersheds. The conservation of Hearst Ranch will prevent the fragmentation of resources both within the Property itself and with respect to the adjoining public and private open space to the north, south and east.



Conservation of the Hearst Ranch also leverages other conservation efforts in the area including the United States Forest Service's purchase of the Williams, Sur Sur Ranch, and Baldwin properties to the north and the conservation properties of the East-West Ranch in the Cambria Pines Conservation Area, and the Molinari, CT Ranch, Williams, Sea West, and Estero properties to the south. This new link would immeasurably assist in the overall goal of protecting large areas of intact California native plant, animal and coastal habitats from Cayucos north to the Big Sur coast.





# Diverse Habitat and Resources

*Over 82,000 Acres of Land With One of the Most Remarkable Diversities of Habitat and Resources*

Hearst Ranch encompasses an impressive variety of habitats and topography - elevations on the Ranch rise from sea level along the coastline to 3,600 feet on some of the peaks along the ridgeline of the Santa Lucia Mountains. Grassland-covered coastal terraces extend to natural sea bluffs, rocky headlands and sandy beaches.

Seven major watershed drainages occur on the Ranch and include portions of the central California coast and inland foothill region. These include the San Carpoforo, Arroyo de la Cruz, Oak Knoll/Arroyo Laguna, Little Pico Creek, Pico Creek, and Nacimiento River Little Burnett Creek/Tobacco Creek watersheds.



*Aerial view of Hearst Ranch looking toward the Santa Lucia Mountains.*



*Aerial view of Hearst Ranch looking toward the Pacific Ocean.*



The plant and wildlife habitats represented on the Ranch are vast and varied, including wetlands, sand dunes, grassland, coastal prairie, coastal scrub, chaparral, coast live oak, riparian woodland, riparian streams, coniferous and mixed evergreen forests, streambeds, floodplains, and beaches. Each contributes to the diversity of species found on the Ranch.



*Sand Dunes*



*Coastal Scrub*



*Streams*



*Mixed Evergreen Forest*

# Over One Thousand Species

## *Including Several Important Plant Communities*

Home to one of the most diverse assemblages of native plants, plant communities, and wildlife habitats in all of California, more than one thousand species of plants and animals have been catalogued at Hearst Ranch. Many plant species listed by the California Native Plant Society are known to occur on the Ranch. Hearst Ranch has some valuable habitats, including coastal prairie and maritime chaparral that are unique to this region. Cattle grazing continues to provide a balanced mosaic of native grasslands and maritime chaparral that maintains the vigor and distribution of these habitats.



*More than 1,000 species have been identified on the Ranch.*



*Zebras were brought to the Ranch by W.R. Hearst and still thrive there.*



# Pristine Habitat

The Hearst Ranch contains thousands of acres of habitat, including large areas of coastal scrub communities, over a thousand acres of riparian woodlands as well as thousands of acres of forests, coast live oak and valley oak woodlands, and chaparral communities. Some areas of the Property provide a special habitat for the Santa Lucia fir, the rarest fir in North America. In addition, the Ranch offers migratory pathways and habitat corridors. Observed birds on the Ranch include the Western snowy plover (Federally Threatened), California brown pelican (Federal and State Endangered), Golden eagle (California Species of Special Concern), Double-crested cormorant, Northern harrier (California Species of Special Concern), Red-tailed hawk, Yellow warbler, Red-necked phalarope, Mourning dove, Snowy egret and Great blue heron.



*Maritime chaparral*



*Compact cobwebby thistle*



*Perennial goldfields*





*Coastal Prairie*



*Santa Lucia fir*



*Santa Lucia fir grove*



*Sea Bluff Scrub*



# Habitat for Fish and Marine Mammals

The coastal area of the Hearst Ranch is comprised of long stretches of coastal bluff along natural headlands, offshore rocks, beaches and freshwater lagoons that provide extensive habitat for shellfish, marine mammals, shorebirds and fish. The federally protected steelhead is known to use the Hearst Ranch's coastal creeks for spawning and habitat. In addition, elephant seals, sea lions and sea otters inhabit the coastline and beaches, making them popular tourist attractions that allow visitors the unique opportunity to view the animals in their natural habitat. The vast property includes lagoons, and riparian and aquatic areas where the following species have been identified:



*California red-legged frog*



*Southwestern pond turtle*



*Steelhead*



*Elephant seals*

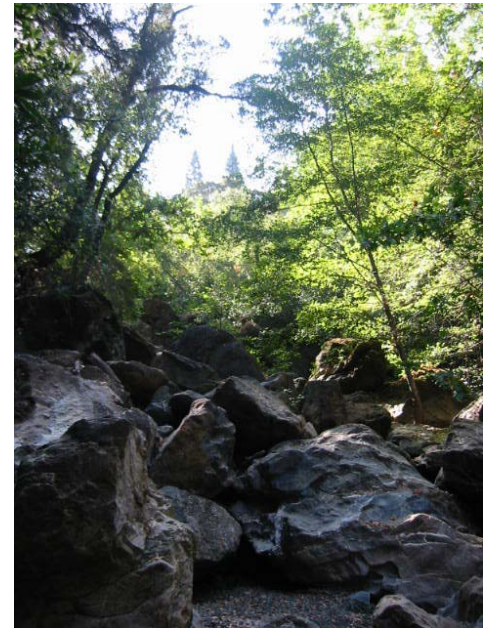


# Riparian Woodlands

Over 1,400 acres of riparian woodland is present on the property. Riparian woodland species include Sycamore and Coast live oak.



*Coast live oak*



*Riparian Woodlands*



*Sycamore*



# Pristine Scenic Resources

Hearst Ranch also possesses incredible visual resources, including the coastal viewshed from All-American Highway and California Scenic Highway, Highway One, and the Hearst Castle. Approximately 18-miles of pristine coastal bluffs and rugged coastline grace the Ranch's west side, with magnificent views of the Pacific Ocean and of rolling grassland, trees, and streams that make up the east side of the Ranch.



*Highway One as it passes through Hearst Ranch*



*Hundreds of thousands of visitors to the area stop to see elephant seals living along the beaches at Hearst Ranch*

# Public Access to Coastal Resources

## *New Public Beaches and Ecologically Friendly Recreational Activities*

Hearst Ranch hugs the sea for 18 miles, providing exceptional unspoiled coastal access. The conservation plan would allow increased coastal public access for low-impact recreational activities for Californians and visitors alike. Thirteen pristine beaches, including Arroyo Laguna Wind Surfer Beach and Point Sierra Nevada Beach, would be included as new public beaches. Elephant seals, sea lions and sea otters inhabit the coastline and beaches, making them popular tourist attractions that allow visitors the unique opportunity to view the animals in their natural habitat. A new coastal trail would link the visitor-serving uses of the Hearst Castle and William Randolph Hearst State Beach to the Old San Simeon Village, the Bureau of Land Management Piedras Blancas lighthouse area, San Simeon Point and the elephant seal viewing area, all located within the boundaries of the Ranch. Portions of the coastal area of the Ranch can accommodate many kinds of ecologically-friendly recreational activities such as hiking, surfing, fishing, beachcombing, bird-watching and windsurfing.





# Protecting California's Ranching Landscape

Historical agricultural uses of what is now the Hearst Ranch began soon after the establishment of the Spanish Mission San Miguel Arcangel in 1797. The current ranch area was considered to be Mission land and the livestock from the mission began to roam the hills around what is now San Simeon. After Mexican independence from Spain, two Mexican land grants were created in the San Simeon area. These two grants included the Piedra Blanca Rancho comprising 48,806 acres, and the San Simeon Rancho comprising 4,469 acres. Livestock grazing on these land grants continued under the land grantees.

In 1865, George Hearst purchased the Piedra Blanca Rancho land grant followed shortly thereafter by purchase of the San Simeon Rancho land grant. George Hearst made these ranchos into one of the finest stock farms in the state, with prize blooded cattle being sold for premium prices (Beck and Haase, 1974). An 1883 history of San Luis Obispo County publication describes agricultural uses of the Hearst Ranch as follows: *"Thus far, it may be said, the chief production of the rancho, in common with the whole coast, are butter and cheese. As to grain and other soil products, the Piedras Blancas lands are of first class, being nearly all susceptible of cultivation and of surpassing richness. Corn, peas, barley, beans, and oats are raised."*

Both George Hearst and his son William Randolph Hearst, subsequently added additional ranch lands adjacent to these land grants to eventually create the 82,000 acre Hearst Ranch of today. The Hearst Ranch has carried forth a tradition of adaptive management and stewardship since the family purchased the ranch in 1865. Pro-active adaptive management implementation has been an integral part of the overall agricultural program management as well as for day-to-day ranch management.

The Ranch's historic working landscape can only be preserved if there are continued ranching and agricultural operations free from commercial and other development pressure. Ranching is a critical component in the protection and maintenance of the Ranch's natural resources. Well-managed grazing is one of the primary reasons for the excellent condition of the native grassland and coastal prairie areas along the terraces. In fact, Hearst Ranch is among the best managed cattle ranches in the nation and is a model for preservation and maintenance of environmental resources.

Other areas of the Ranch have played important parts in California's early history as well. At one time, the Ranch supported a wide variety of agricultural operations, including crop and dairy farming. Additionally, a portion of the craggy coast was home to a small yet bustling whaling village.



# **HEARST RANCH**

*Fee Acquisition Area*

*Summary of Resources*



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**HEARST RANCH**  
***Fee Acquisition Area***  
***Summary of Resources***

**I.     Introduction**

This document provides a summary of resources on the coastal area of the Hearst Ranch proposed for fee acquisition (the “Property”). The Property is currently part of the Hearst Ranch and is located on the west side of the federally designated All-American Road and California Scenic Highway 1. The Property includes approximately 13 miles of the Central California Coast fronting the Pacific Ocean. This area includes thirteen plant and wildlife species with special status (federal or state endangered, threatened or rare) classification. Approximately forty additional plant species are listed by the California Native Plant Society. The volume and high quality of resources on the Property are exceptional. This property is one of the last remaining privately held coastal properties of this size that offers a vast and abundant amount of natural habitat.

The Property, along with the remaining Hearst Ranch land west of Highway 1 (which is proposed for consideration easements) provides an 18-mile coastal corridor, and is located west of the historic Hearst Castle, which was donated to the State of California by the Hearst Corporation in 1957 and attracts approximately one million visitors each year. The towns of Cambria and San Simeon Acres lie to the south, and the Big Sur coast is the northern boundary of this segment of the California coast.

**II.    Summary**

**A.     Resources and Habitats**

The Property contains high quality habitat and resources. The conservation transaction for the Property offers the opportunity to preserve ecological resources for nearly every type of California coastal habitat. Plant and wildlife habitats on their approximate acreages include approximately:

- 70 acres of freshwater lagoons and wetlands
- 90 acres of sand dunes
- 600 acres of grasslands
- 50 acres of coastal prairie
- 250 acres of coastal sage scrub communities
- 20 acres of riparian woodland

The vast number of plant and wildlife species that are found on the Property include numerous federal and state protected, endangered, and rare species as well as other species of significant value. These species include:

- The northern elephant seal, the California sea lion and the harbor seal



- The State protected and federally threatened southern sea otter
- The federally protected white-tailed kite and peregrine falcon
- The federally threatened California red-legged frog
- The federally endangered tidewater goby and federally threatened steelhead
- Quillwort, pondweed, sedges and numerous other wetlands plants
- The San Francisco gumplant and the compact cobwebby thistle, both of which are California Native Plant Society listed plants

In addition to species that are threatened, endangered, or species of special concern, there is a vast number of other species on the Property. For example, some of the larger mammals on the Property include the following:

- Black tail deer
- Bobcats
- Mountain lions
- Coyotes

## **B. Visual Resources and Scenic Qualities**

The Property consists of 13 miles of coastal property fronting the Pacific Ocean. The Property has long and pristine coastal bluffs and rugged coastline and provides uninterrupted views of the Pacific Ocean and adjacent areas. Preserving the Property's visual resources would ensure that the travelers on the federally designated All-American Highway and California Scenic Highway One and the visitors to the area could enjoy the unspoiled views and scenery for generations to come.

## **C. Coastal Access and Recreation**

The Property provides significant coastal access and recreation opportunities. The Property consists of thirteen pristine beaches, including Arroyo Laguna Wind Surfer Beach and Point Sierra Nevada. Elephant seals, sea lions and sea otters inhabit the coastline and the beaches are popular tourist attractions. In addition, the Property could provide access for hiking, surfing, fishing, beachcombing, bird watching and windsurfing. The Property would also provide a vital connection for the California Coastal Trail.

## **D. Ecological Connectivity**

The volume and the high quality of the resources on the Property are exceptional. Further, there are no privately held coastal properties of this magnitude that provide the opportunity to protect pristine natural coastal lands. A key ecological connection and wildlife corridor between Big Sur, the San Luis Obispo coastline and Cambria, the Property also offers a natural link to the Harmony Coast Ecological Reserve to the south and the Williams property to the north, as well as the Los Padres National Forest, California Coastal Monuments, and Monterey Bay Marine National Sanctuary.

The Property would contribute immeasurably to the overall goal of conserving coastal habitats from Cayucos north to the Big Sur coast and would complement the East-West Ranch acquisition in Cambria in this regard. The Property's elevation ranges from sea level at the shoreline to 50 feet in the rolling hills abutting Scenic Highway 1.

### **III. Resources and Habitats** (All Acreages are Approximate)

#### **A. Freshwater Lagoons and Wetland (70 Acres)**

The Property's lagoons host a rich assemblage of plants. Species present in these lagoons include the following:

- Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)
- Tidewater goby (*Eucuclogobius newberryi*)
- One unidentified stickleback species

Valuable wetlands are also located on the Property and include the following plant species:

- Elodea (*Elodea* ssp.)
- Quillwort (*Isoetes* ssp.)
- Pondweed (*Potamogeton* ssp.)
- Sedges (*Carex* ssp.)
- Rushes (*Juncus* ssp.)
- Cattail (*Typha* ssp.)
- Mimulus (*Mimulus* ssp.)

The Property's beaches and other aquatic resources also provide significant habitat and breeding opportunities. The following species are common along beaches used as seasonal haul-out areas for breeding and rearing of the young:

- The northern sea elephant seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*)
- California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*)
- Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*)
- In addition, the southern sea otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis* – Federally threatened – DFG: Fully Protected) is commonly seen in the kelp beds and ocean waters offshore from the coastal terraces of the Hearst Ranch.

#### **B. Coastal Sand Dune (90 Acres)**

A major sand dune complex is located at Point Sierra Nevada. These dunes are well vegetated and include the following plant species:

- Sand verbena (*Achillea* ssp.)
- Yarrow (*Ambrosia* ssp.)
- California saltbush (*Atriplex* ssp.)



- Dune morning glory (*Calystegia* ssp.)
- Dune evening primrose (*Camissonia* ssp.)
- Iceplant

Dune scrub communities on the Property include plants such as:

- California sagebrush (*Artemisia* ssp.)
- Coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*)
- Coastal buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*)
- Sage (*Salvia* ssp.)
- Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) occurs along the dune/grassland boundaries

The dunes also include numerous California Native Plant Society (CNPS) listed plants including:

- Compact cobwebby thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* var. *Hoover* – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)
- Branching beach-aster [(*Corethrogyne leucophylla* (Lindl.) Jeps.] – CNPS List 3: RED 1-2-3)
- San Francisco gumplant (*Grindelia hirsutula* var. *maritima* – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)

In addition, numerous shorebirds are found at or near the coastal sand dunes and other birds have been observed along the shoreline in rocky intertidal areas and on off-shore rocks.

These birds include:

- California Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus* – Federal and State endangered)
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus* – Federally threatened – DFG:CSC)
- Long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus* – DFG: CSC)
- Marbled godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)
- Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)
- Several species of sandpipers
- Black oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*)

### **C. California Grassland and Coastal Prairie (650 Acres)**

The Property has exceptional grasslands and coastal prairie. The coastal prairie (approximately 50 acres) features deep adobe soil that retains moisture for long periods of the winter, spring and summer months. Some special status species occur in these areas, including:

- Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*)
- Goldfields (including *Lasthenia macrantha* – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)
- The flowering lilies (including the Arroyo de la Cruz mariposa lily – *Calochortus clavatus* var. *recurvifolius* List 1B: RED 3-2-3; and the Large-flowered mariposa lily).
- The Arroyo de la Cruz mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *recurvifolius* – CNPS List 1B:RED 3-2-3)
- The large-flowered mariposa lily (*Calochortus weedii* var. *Purdy* – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)
- Nuttall's milk-vetch (*Astragalus nuttallii* – CNPS List 4:RED 1-2-3)
- San Luis Obispo sedge (*Carex obispoensis* Stacey – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3).

In addition to the plant species, significant wildlife species have been observed on the Property, including the following:

- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus* – California Species of Special Concern, DFG:Fully Protected)
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos* – California Species of Special Concern, DFG:CSC)
- Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus* – DFG:CSC)
- Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum* – State endangered, DFG: Fully Protected)

### **D. Coastal Scrub Communities (250 Acres)**

Approximately 250 acres of coastal scrub communities have been identified on the Property, the majority of which consists of northern coastal scrub with approximately 30 acres of sea bluff coastal scrub. Northern coastal scrub tends to be located on north-facing exposures and includes the following plants:

- Coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*)
- Coastal golden-yarrow (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*)
- Figwort (*Scrophularia californica*)
- California sagebush (*Artemisia californica*)

Sea bluff coastal scrub is primarily located on the face of coastal terrace bluffs and inland along a narrow stretch of coastal terraces. Plants in this area include:

- California aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia*)
- Beach sagewort (*Artemisia pycnocephala*)



- Coastal buckwheat (*Erigonum parvifolium*)
- Coastal golden-yarrow (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*)
- Goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*)
- Iceplant

#### **E. Riparian Woodland (20 Acres)**

Approximately 20 acres of riparian woodland is present on the Property. In addition, streambed/floodplain areas that are essentially unvegetated total approximately 31 acres within the Property. The California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii* – federally threatened, DFG:CSC) is present in some of these areas. Western pond turtles (*Clemmys marmorata* – Species of Special Concern, DFG:CSC) have also been observed. Significant cover and forage is provided in these areas for wildlife.

#### **IV. Cultural Resources**

Archaeological sites are located on the property. No historic sites are identified on the Property. However, the Property is immediately proximate to notable sites, including the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse, Old San Simeon Village and San Simeon Point. The area has an interesting history and portions of the Hearst Ranch were utilized for grazing by Missions San Miguel and San Luis Obispo in the late 1700's and early 1800's. Rancho Piedra Blanca was a Mexican land grant of 48,806 acres that George Hearst purchased as part of the Hearst Ranch in 1865. The Piedra Blanca Lighthouse complex that abuts the Property was built in 1875 and has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The lighthouse complex is administered by the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management. Seaweed harvesting occurred along the north coast of San Luis Obispo County from the late 1870's into the 1900's. The site of a Chinese seaweed farmer's compound is located near the mouth of Arroyo de los Chinos.

# **HEARST RANCH**

*Conservation Easement Area*

*Summary of Resources*



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**HEARST RANCH**  
*Conservation Easement Area*  
*Summary of Resources*

**I. Introduction**

The entire Hearst Ranch includes approximately 82,000 acres (128 square miles) and 18 miles of California's most scenic and tourist-traveled coastline. Conservation easements are proposed in order to continue the preservation and maintenance of the Property's exceptional ecological, visual and agricultural resources and to continue agricultural production on the site, which has been instrumental in maintaining these resources. The vast majority of the property that would be subject to easements is located east of the federally designated All-American Road and California Scenic Highway 1. This document provides a summary of resources on the area of the Hearst Ranch proposed for conservation easements (the "Property").

The Property has one of the most remarkable and diverse assemblages of native plants, plant communities, and natural habitats in all of California. Few, if any areas approach the Property's diversity of species and vegetation. At least half of all known plant species occurring in San Luis Obispo County have been observed on the Property. Elevations on the Property rise from sea level along the coastline to over 3600 feet on some of the peaks along the ridgeline of the Santa Lucia Mountains. The diverse topography and climate contribute to the vast and diverse number of species on the Property.

Overall, the Property is home to more than 1,000 plant and wildlife species. Many plant species listed by the California Native Plant Society are known to occur on the Ranch.

The Property offers unique cultural and archeological resources, coastal and interior habitats, and native plant and wildlife species, maintained in a large, contiguous and principally undeveloped landscape. It features connectivity providing wildlife corridors to other large natural open areas (including Los Padres National Forest, Fort Hunter Liggett, Camp Roberts, the Pacific Ocean, and other open lands held by state and federal agencies and private parties).

Habitats represented within the Property include: coastal creeks, streams, springs, wetlands, stock ponds, perennial grasslands, serpentine outcrops and soils, dunes, maritime chaparral, coastal prairie, coastal bluff scrub, oak woodlands, oak savannas, riparian woodlands, sycamore woodlands and mixed evergreen forests.

The Property also includes unsurpassed coastal scenic vistas, Santa Lucia Mountain views, and the historic working ranching landscape as viewed by millions of visitors along State Highway 1, a federally designated All-American Road, and from the Hearst-San Simeon State Historical Monument.



## **II. Summary**

### **A. Resources and Habitats**

The proposed easement area offers extraordinary resources on approximately 80,000 acres. The 126 square mile easement area is approximately five times the size of Manhattan and over two and a half times the size of the City and County of San Francisco. It has been owned and managed as an agricultural and ranching property for nearly 150 years by Hearst which has kept the property intact and pristine. Though much of the 80,000 plus acres do not contain critical habitat or species, scattered across the property are numerous areas of habitat which would be protected under the conservation easement which limits future uses. Under the easement, the working agricultural landscape would be preserved and future development would be dramatically limited. This summary describes the conservation easement area and identifies the types of resources located on the different areas of the Property.

Under the proposed conservation easement, strict limitations are placed on any future applications for additional development on the Property, in accordance with the terms of the easement. Any such applications would require additional environmental review as required by the responsible agency, such as the County of San Luis Obispo, which would be conducted at a detailed level and would be reviewed in accordance with legal requirements for development, including the California Environmental Quality Act.

Elevations on the Property rise from sea level along the coastline to over 3600 feet on some of the peaks along the ridgeline of the Santa Lucia Mountains. In addition to the sheer size of the Property, the diverse topography and climate contribute to the vast and diverse number of species on the Property. Plant and wildlife habitats and their approximate acreages within the Property:

- 20 acres of wetlands and freshwater lagoons
- 25,000 acres of California grassland and coastal prairie
- 7,500 acres of coastal scrub communities
- 15,000 acres of chaparral communities
- 28,500 acres of coast live oak and other woodlands
- 1,400 acres of riparian woodland and riparian streams
- 3,300 acres of forests
- 100 acres of streambeds/floodplains
- More than 60 stock ponds
- 7 major watershed drainages

The vast plant and wildlife species identified on the Property include:

- The golden eagle, a California species of special concern
- The federally threatened California red-legged frog
- The yellow-legged frog, a California species of special concern

- The federally threatened steelhead
- The federally threatened tidewater goby
- A vast array of wetlands plants

Many non-listed species of wildlife, including amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals occur on the Property. Some of the mammals include:

- California black bears
- Zebras
- Black tailed deer
- Roosevelt elk
- Barbary sheep
- Sambar deer
- Bobcats
- Mountain lions
- Tahr goat

## **B. Visual Resources**

The Property possesses spectacular visual resources. The surrounding public resources further enhance the importance of the Property's visual resources. The federally designated All-American Highway and California Scenic Highway One runs adjacent to the Property and is a major scenic corridor that facilitates four million car trips per year. Further, the Property surrounds the Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument (Hearst Castle), which is visited by approximately one million people each year.

## **C. Ecological Connectivity**

The Property has one of the most remarkable and diverse assemblages of native plants, plant communities, and natural habitats in California. Few, if any areas approach the Property's diversity of species and vegetation types. In addition, because of the Property's size and resources, a conservation easement would provide significant ecological connections to other parts of the State and to other nearby conservation efforts.

In total, the property contains seven major watershed drainages covering a total of approximately 80,000 acres of the Central California coast and inland foothill region. This includes the San Carpoforo, Arroyo de la Cruz, Oak Knoll/Arroyo Laguna, Little Pico Creek, Pico Creek, and Nacimiento River Little Burnett Creek/Tobacco Creek watersheds.

The conservation easements also provide a logical link to other conservation efforts in the area, including the addition of the Williams, Sur Sur Ranch, the Baldwin properties and the Los Padres National Forest to the north, the purchase of the East-West Ranch in Cambria and the Molinari, CT Ranch, Williams, Sea West, and Estero conservation



acquisitions to the south. In connection with these other conservation efforts, the conservation easement assists in the overall goal of protecting large areas of intact California native plant and animal habitats from Cayucos north to the Big Sur coast.

Because of the Property's size and resources, the conservation easements would provide a cumulative benefit by: (i) preventing fragmentation of resources both within the Property and with respect to conservation areas to the north, south and east; and (ii) providing a conservation opportunity that cannot be matched by conservation of smaller properties on a piece by piece basis.

#### **D. Historic Working Landscape**

The Property has operated as a cattle ranch since the mid-1800's. The conservation easement would preserve the historic working landscape on the Property, which includes the continuing ranch operations. In addition to providing a continued economic benefit by providing a foundation for jobs, taxes and agricultural production, the ranch operations have been a critical component to protecting and maintaining the Property's resources.

Historical agricultural uses of what is now the Hearst Ranch began soon after the establishment of the Spanish Mission San Miguel Arcangel in 1797. The current ranch area was considered to be Mission land and the livestock from the mission began to roam the hills around what is now San Simeon. After Mexican independence from Spain, two Mexican land grants were created in the San Simeon area. These two grants included the Piedra Blanca Rancho comprising 48,806 acres, and the San Simeon Rancho comprising 4,469 acres. Livestock grazing on these land grants continued under the land grantees.

In 1865, George Hearst purchased the Piedra Blanca Rancho land grant followed shortly thereafter by purchase of the San Simeon Rancho land grant. George Hearst made these ranches into one of the finest stock farms in the state, with prize blooded cattle being sold for premium prices (Beck and Haase, 1974). An 1883 history of San Luis Obispo County publication describes agricultural uses of the Hearst Ranch as follows:

*"Thus far, it may be said, the chief production of the rancho, in common with the whole coast, are butter and cheese. As to grain and other soil products, the Piedras Blancas lands are of first class, being nearly all susceptible of cultivation and of surpassing richness. Corn, peas, barley, beans, and oats are raised."*

Both George Hearst and his son William Randolph Hearst, subsequently added additional ranch lands adjacent to these land grants to eventually create the 82,000 acre Hearst Ranch of today.

The Hearst Ranch has carried forth a tradition of adaptive management and stewardship since the family purchased the ranch in 1865. Pro-active adaptive management implementation has been an integral part of the overall agricultural program management as well as for day-to-day ranch management.

The Ranch's historic working landscape can only be preserved if there are continued ranching and agricultural operations free from commercial and other development pressure. Ranching is a critical component in the protection and maintenance of the Ranch's natural resources. Well-managed grazing is one of the primary reasons for the excellent condition of the native grassland and coastal prairie areas along the terraces. In fact, Hearst Ranch is among the best managed cattle ranches in the nation and is a model for preservation and maintenance of environmental resources.

Other areas of the Ranch have played important parts in California's early history as well. At one time, the Ranch supported a wide variety of agricultural operations, including crop and dairy farming. Additionally, a portion of the craggy coast was home to a small yet bustling whaling village.

### **III. Resources and Habitats** (All Acreages are Approximate)

#### **A. Wetlands and Freshwater Lagoons (20 acres)**

The Property's freshwater lagoons host a rich assemblage of plants and provide a key resource for several species. Species present in these lagoons include the following:

- Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)
- Tidewater goby (*Eucuclogobius newberryi*)
- Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus aculeatus*)
- Western pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*)
- California Red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*)

The Property's wetlands are home to many plants and numerous wildlife species have been observed in or near wetland areas. Wetland plants include:

- Elodea (*Elodea* ssp.)
- Quillwort (*Isoetes* ssp.)
- Pondweed (*Potamogeton* ssp.)
- Sedges (*Carex* ssp.)
- Rushes (*Juncus* ssp.)
- Cattail (*Typha* ssp.)
- Mimulus (*Mimulus* ssp.)

Some of the notable bird species observed in or near wetlands areas include:

- The great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*)
- The snowy egret (*Egretta thula*)
- Great egret (*Ardea alba*)
- Green heron (*Butorides virescens*)
- The black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

## **B. Sand Dunes (20 Acres)**

A 20-acre sand dune complex is located on the Property. These dunes include plant species such as:

- Sand verbenia (*Achillea* ssp.)
- Yarrow (*Ambrosia* ssp.)
- California saltbush (*Atriplex* ssp.)
- Dune morning glory (*Calystegia* ssp.)
- Dune evening primrose (*Camissonia* ssp.)
- Iceplant
- California sagebrush (*Artemisia* ssp.)
- Coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*)
- Coastal buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*)
- Sage (*Salvia* ssp.)
- Tree lupine (*Lupinus arboreus*) has encroached into some grassland areas bordering the dune complex
- Compact cobwebby thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* var. *Hoover* – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)
- Branching beach-aster [(*Corethrogyne leucophylla* (Lindl.) Jeps.] – CNPS List 3: RED 1-2-3)
- San Francisco gumplant (*Grindelia hirsutula* var. *maritima* – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)

In addition to plant species found in the dunes, the dunes provide a resource for several species of birds, including the following:

- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus* – Federally threatened – DFG:CSC)
- The long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus* – DFG: CSC)
- Marbled godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)
- Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)
- Sandpipers (several species)
- The black oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*)
- The double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus* – DFG: CSC)

## **C. California Grassland and Coastal Prairie (25,000 Acres)**

The Property possesses exceptional grasslands and coastal prairie. While there is approximately 200 acres of coastal prairie on the property, the following species are located in these areas. Some species consist of interspersed patches in these areas:



- Annual ryegrass
- Bromes
- Fescues
- Filaree
- Bur clovers
- The Arroyo de la Cruz mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *recurvifolius* – CNPS List 1B:RED 3-2-3)
- The large-flowered mariposa lily (*Calochortus weedii* var. *Purdy* – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)
- San Luis Obispo sedge (*Carex obispoensis* Stacey – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)

Where deep adobe soils exist, which retain moisture for a long period of the winter, spring and into summer months, the following species were observed:

- Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*)
- Goldfields (*lasthenia species* )
- Purple mint (*Pogogyne douglasii*)
- The flowering lilies (*calochortus species*)

Numerous bird species have been observed in or adjacent to grassland or coastal prairie areas on the Property. Bird species observed in these areas include:

- The white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus* – California Species of Special Concern, DFG: Fully Protected)
- The golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos* – California Species of Special Concern, DFG:CSC)
- The sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus* – DFG: CSC)
- The great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*)
- The snowy egret (*Egretta thula*)
- The northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus* – DFG:CSC)
- The California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus* – Federal Endangered and State Endangered)
- Turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*)
- The bald eagle

Other wildlife species, including non-native species, seen in the grasslands include:

- Black tail deer
- Roosevelt elk
- Sambar deer
- Zebras
- Barbary sheep

- Feral pigs
- Skunks
- Raccoons
- Tahr goat
- Wild turkeys

Zebras are seen frequently on the Junge Ranch grasslands at the south end of the Property. A herd of about 125 zebra has freely resided there since being released from the Hearst Castle Zoo years ago.

#### **D. Bunchgrass on Franciscan Outcrops (60 Acres)**

Approximately 60 acres of land on the Property contains bunchgrass on franciscan outcrops. Serpentine or franciscan outcrops and soils derived from these outcrops form a special habitat for rare plant communities that may include perennial bunchgrasses, herbaceous plants and forbs.

The Property includes numerous pristine habitats, and the presence of certain serpentine, such as the chocolate lily or chocolate bells indicates that the ground has never been plowed or graded. Serpentine endemics that have been observed in the coastal outcrops include:

- Palmer's spineflower (*Chorizanthe palmeri* S. Wats – CNPS List 4: RED 1-3-3),
- Small-leaved lomatium (*Lomatium parvifolium*- CNPS List 4: RED 1-2-3),
- Chocolate lily (*Fritillaria biflora*)
- Shooting stars (*Dodecatheon* ssp.)
- Mariposa lily (*Calochortus* var. *recurvifolia* – CNPS List 1B: RED 3-2-3)
- Hoffman's sanicle (*Sanicula hoffmannii* – CNPS list 4: RED 1-1-3), and
- Hickman's onion (*Allium hickmanii* Greene – CNPS List 1B: RED 2-2-3)

In addition, grasses and some pentachaeta species were observed in these areas, including:

- Native bromes (*Bromus* ssp.)
- *Koeleria macrantha*
- *Melica torreyana*
- Goldback
- Coffee ferns

There are also numerous plants and trees that are found in the interior on serpentine or franciscan-derived soils. They include the following:

- Bishop manzanita (*Arctostaphylos obispoensis* – CNPS List 4: 1-1-3)
- Yucca (*Yucca whipplei*)

- Foothill pines (*Pinus sabiniana*)
- Coulter pines (*Pinus coulteri*)
- Sargent cypress (*Cupressus sargentii*)
- Hardham's bedstraw (*Galium hardhamiae* – CNPS List 1B: 2-1-3)
- Palmer's spineflower (*Chorizanthe palmeri* S. Wats – CNPS List 4: RED 1-3-3)

#### **E. Coastal Scrub Communities (7,500 Acres)**

Approximately 7,500 acres of coastal scrub communities has been identified on the Property. Plants in these communities include:

- Coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*)
- Coastal golden-yarrow (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*)
- Figwort (*Scrophularia californica*)
- California sagebush (*Artemisia californica*)
- Bush monkey-flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*)
- Various species of sage (*Salvia* spp.), including black sage (*Salvia mellifera*)
- Coyote bush (*Baccharis pillularis*)
- Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*)
- California aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia*)
- Beach sagewort (*Artemisia pycnocephala*)
- Coastal buckwheat (*Erigonum parvifolium*)
- Coastal golden-yarrow (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*)
- Goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*)
- Iceplant

#### **F. Chaparral Communities (15,000 acres)**

These are approximately 15,000 acres of chaparral communities on the property, which includes close to one thousand acres of maritime chaparral and over 14,000 acres of mixed chaparral and chamisal chaparral. Chamisal chaparral may appear reddish when viewed from a distance, owing to the chemise in late summer and fall color. Plant species in the mixed chaparral or chamisal chaparral areas include:

- Manzanita species (*Arctostaphylos* spp.)
- Ceanothus species (*Ceanothus* spp.)
- Yerba santa (*Eriodictyon* spp.)
- Mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*)
- Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*)
- Sugarbush (*Rhus ovata*)
- Buckwheat



- Toyon

#### **G. Coast Live Oak and Other Woodlands (28,500 Acres)**

There are approximately 28,500 acres of coast live oak and other woodlands on the Property. The oak woodlands form dense, closed-canopy forests with an understory of grasses and forbs. Wind-sculpting is common along the coast where on-shore winds prune back vegetation in sloping patterns. Species in the coast live oak woodland include:

- Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- California bay (*Umbellularia californica*)
- Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)

Several bird and mammal species use the coast live oak woodlands as they provide cover and forage, including the following:

- Steller's jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)
- Scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*)
- Black tail deer
- Roosevelt elk (*non-native*)
- Sambar deer (*non-native*)
- Bobcats
- Other small mammals

#### **H. Foothill Woodland (6,000 Acres)**

Approximately 6,000 acres of foothill woodland is located on the Property. Foothill woodland is found in the higher elevations and interior. Species located in this community include:

- Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*)
- Blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*)
- Foothill pine (*Pinus sabiniana*)
- California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)
- California juniper (*Juniperus californica*)

Scattered shrubs may intergrade with foothill woodland, and include:

- Manzanita species (*Arctostaphylos* ssp.)
- Buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*)
- Yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*)
- Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*)

- Gooseberry (*Ribes quercetorum*)

Several bird species, including several types of raptors, are abundant in the foothill woodland areas. These species include:

- Golden eagles
- Turkey vultures
- Red-tailed hawks
- California quail
- Mountain quail
- Wild turkeys
- Band-tailed pigeons

An extensive and diverse range of other wildlife has also been observed on the Property in foothill woodland areas. Some of these species are also found in valley oak woodland, mixed evergreen and conifer forest. These species include:

- California Black Bear
- Mountain lions
- Roosevelt elk
- Black tail deer
- Bobcat
- Badger
- Fox

## **I. Riparian Woodland and Riparian Streams (1,400 Acres)**

Approximately 1,400 acres of riparian woodland is present on the Property. Species in some or most of these areas include:

- Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*)
- Cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*)
- California bay (*Umbellularia californica*)
- Coast live oak (*quercus agrifolia*)
- Willow species (*Salix* spp.)
- Valley oak (*quercus lobata*)
- Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)

Some riparian streams offer habitat to a wide range of amphibians and reptiles, including the following:

- Yellow-legged frog (California Species of Special Concern)

- California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii* – Federally threatened, DFG: CSC)
- Western pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*)
- Two-striped garter snake
- Santa Cruz garter snake
- Western rattlesnake

In addition, the riparian streams offer habitat value to a wide range of birds. Birds that have been observed along riparian corridors include:

- The acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*)
- Downy woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*)
- Mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*)
- Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)
- Turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*)
- American kestrel (*Falco sparveris*)
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)
- Wilson's snipe (*Gallinago delicata*)
- Red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)
- Several species of yellow warblers (*Dendroica* ssp.)
- The American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)
- Common raven (*Corvus corax*)
- The European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
- The canyon wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*)
- The American dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*)
- Mergansers (*Mergus* ssp.)
- Bald eagle

#### **J. Valley Oak Woodland (1,000 Acres)**

Approximately 1,000 acres of valley oak woodland is located on the Property. These communities are dominated by valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) that grow to be very large and scattered.

#### **K. Mixed Evergreen Forest (300 Acres)**

Approximately 300 acres of mixed evergreen forest is located on the Property. Mixed evergreen forest is located on slopes in the higher country, particularly on the north-facing slopes of the higher ridges and in deeper canyons with north-facing exposures. These communities include tree species such as those found in oak woodlands and conifer forest including the following:



- Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)
- Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*)
- Coulter pine (*Pinus coulteri*)
- Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*)
- Blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*)
- Tan bark oak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*)
- Canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*)
- Foothill pine (*Pinus sabiniana*)
- California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)
- California juniper (*Juniperus californica*)
- California bay (*Umbellularia californica*)
- Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)
- Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)

Coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) have been observed within mixed evergreen forests, however, these appear to be either planted redwoods or those that may have regenerated nearby from planted stock. Redwood trees were known to be planted by early settlers.

#### **L. Conifer Forest (2,000 Acres)**

Approximately 2,000 acres of conifer forest is located on the Property. Conifer forest is found primarily on the high ridges and mountains of the Property along the crest of the Santa Lucia range. Types of conifers that are found on the Property include:

- Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)
- Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*)
- Coulter pine (*Pinus coulteri*)

One particularly prominent visual feature of the Property is the Pine Forest, which is located between Little Pico and Pico Creeks just east of Highway 1. It is a scenic feature from the highway that provides habitat for wildlife and includes Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*).

#### **M. Sargent Cypress (*Cupressus sargentii*) (600 Acres)**

Approximately 600 acres of Sargent cypress has been identified on the Property. Sargent cypress groves are located on serpentine or franciscan-derived soils and bedrock. Soils are thin and infertile but the sargent cypress appears to grow exclusively in this environment on the Property.

**N. Santa Lucia Fir Forest (*Abies bracteata* [D.Don] Poit.) (120 Acres)**

Approximately 120 acres of Santa Lucia fir has been identified on the Property. Santa Lucia firs are the rarest type of fir tree in North America. They have a distinctive, pointed-crown and conical body that is deep blue-green in color. They grow in deep canyons on the Property where sunlight is less harsh and soil moisture is higher. The populations appear healthy and seem to be successfully reproducing, as all ages of Santa Lucia firs are present.

**O. Planted Forest (133 Acres Total)**

A total of 133 acres of planted Monterey Pines, Monterey Cypress and Eucalyptus are located in a few distinct areas on the Property. Monterey pines and cypress were planted in the late 1800's by George Hearst and in the early 1900's by W.R. Hearst as windbreaks for San Simeon Point.

Monterey pines were also planted in windrows at Ragged Point in the early 1900's and can be seen today in distinct rows across the area. Monterey pines were also planted directly below the Hearst Castle on a ridge that partially screens the hilltop.

**P. Streambed/Floodplain (103 Acres)**

Approximately 103 acres of streambed/floodplain areas are located on the Property. These areas are essentially unvegetated. Some areas provide forage and resources for several fish species, including:

- Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss* – Federally threatened, DFG:CSC)
- Tidewater goby (*Eucuclogobius newberryi* – Federally threatened, DFG:CSC)
- Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus aculeatus*)
- Prickly sculpin (*Cottus asper*)
- Coast range sculpin (*Cottus aleuticus*)
- Rainbow trout
- California roach (*Lavinia symmetricus*)
- Sacramento sucker (*Catostomus occidentalis*)
- Green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*)

**Q. Stockponds (60+ Total)**

There are over 60 stockponds on the Property. Some of these stockponds dry up during summer and fall months, and refill with rainfall during winter and spring months. Some areas serve as a resource for the following species:

- California red-legged frogs
- Western pond turtles
- Santa Cruz garter snakes

- Two-striped garter snakes
- Ducks of several varieties
- Damselflies
- Dragonflies

## **R. Cultural Resources**

Archaeological sites have been identified on portions of the Property both west and east of Highway 1. Historic features on the west side of Highway 1 include the old town of San Simeon that started as a whaling station at San Simeon Point in 1852. The town consisted of over 45 structures and wharves with a population of more than 200 in 1868. The first shipping wharf was constructed south of the whaling station by George Hearst in 1869 but the town had declined with the whaling industry by 1878. In 1878 George Hearst constructed a larger pier, warehouses and other structures around San Simeon. In 1903, a group built an abalone-drying facility at the old whaling station site. Later, in 1930, W. R. Hearst constructed Julia Morgan-designed casas near San Simeon.

A brief history of the Property provides some background on the Property's existing ranch operations and how the Property came to comprise almost the entirety of the existing Hearst Ranch. Agricultural operations on the Property have been documented dating back hundreds of years. The Hearst Ranch was utilized for grazing by Missions San Miguel and San Luis Obispo in the late 1700 and early 1800's. The Junge Ranch portion of the Property was part of the 1842 San Simeon land grant. In 1865, George Hearst purchased the 48,806 acre Rancho Piedra Blanca. Since 1865, additional properties were added to the ranch for livestock grazing and farming uses that comprise the existing 82,000 plus acre Hearst Ranch today.

The Hearst Ranch home circa 1878 is located in the ranch headquarters area along Arroyo del Puerto. Other activities on the Property were consistent with agricultural operations. Five dairy areas were present in 1880. The Property surrounds the Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. While the Hearst Castle was donated to the state by Hearst and is not under the same ownership as the Property, historic features on the Property include campsite areas, adobes, homesteads, the Hearst Ranch home and the dairies discussed above. The Property was also home to several campsites and homesteads.